

PROCEEDINGS
OF A
CONVENTION OF MASONS

HELD IN THE
CITY OF NEW YORK,

TO CONSIDER THE STATE OF MASONRY IN THE JURISDICTION,
AND PROPOSE SOME HONORABLE SOLUTION OF THE DIFFICULTIES NOW EXISTING:

WITH AN
ADDRESS

AND
Proposed Articles of Union.

NEW YORK:
PRINTED FOR DISTRIBUTION.
1857.

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PROCEEDINGS.

NEW YORK, 15th June, 1857.

At a preliminary meeting held in pursuance of a call of Doric Lodge, No. 280, inviting sister Lodges to participate, a large number of brethren assembled at the hall of that Lodge.

The R. W. Bro. JOHN W. SIMONS, on taking the chair, stated the object of the meeting to be, for the purpose of considering the action of the majority, at the late Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge, to correct the evidently erroneous ideas that prevailed with the brethren from the rural districts, and, if possible, to devise some plan, avoiding the constitutional difficulties presented in June last, whereby the whole Fraternity of the state could be brought into one fold, and peace be the rule, instead of the exception among us.

Several other brethren having expressed sentiments of a like nature, it was on motion unanimously

Resolved, That a committee of nine Representatives, now present, be appointed to make arrangements for a general meeting of all the Lodges in the city and vicinity, by delegates, on the second Monday in July, and that the committee have power to hire a suitable room for the purpose, and issue a call, inviting all Lodges in the city to participate.

The following brethren having been nominated and confirmed were appointed such committee:

WM. GURNEY,	JOS. D. STEWART,
GEO. W. RAY,	JOHN W. SIMONS,
L. JACOBS,	ROBT. BEATTY, JR.
JNO. A. FAYE,	H. R. JACKSON,
	H. J. SNYDER.

The meeting then adjourned, subject to the call of the committee.

NEW YORK, July 13th, 1857.

A large number of brethren, representing fifty-six Lodges located in the city of New York and vicinity, assembled at Odd Fellows' Hall, in obedience to the following call:

NEW YORK, 18th June, 1857.

To the W. M., Wardens and Brethren of Lodge, No.

BRETHREN:—At a meeting of the Representatives of a large number of Lodges, held the 15th inst., at the Hall of Doric Lodge, No. 280, on the invitation of that Lodge, to take into consideration the condition of Masonry in this jurisdiction, the following, among other proceedings, was unanimously adopted:

"Resolved, That a committee of nine Representatives, now present, be appointed to make arrangements for a general meeting of all the Lodges in the city and vicinity, by delegates, on the second Monday in July, and that the committee have power to hire a suitable room for the purpose, and issue a call, inviting all Lodges in the city to participate."

The object of this convention is to take counsel together on the unhappy state of affairs now existing, and to devise some honorable solution of our difficulties.

The Convention will be held in the Grand Lodge room, at Odd Fellows' Hall, July 13, at 7½ o'clock, P.M., and Lodges are requested to be represented by their first three officers and their Past Masters.

Fraternally,

WM. GURNEY,
JOS. D. STEWART,
GEO. W. RAY,
JNO. W. SIMONS,
L. JACOBS,
ROBERT BEATTY,
JNO. A. FAYE,
H. R. JACKSON,
H. J. SNYDER,

Committee.

The Convention was called to order by the R. W. JNO. W. SIMONS, who nominated the W. WM. GURNEY as Chairman, Br. ROBT. BEATTY, Jr., was appointed Secretary, *pro tem*.

On motion, the Chair appointed Bros. S. B. TOBEY, H. W. TURNER and GEO. YOUNG a Committee on Permanent Organization.

During the absence of the committee Bro. SIMONS addressed the Convention, stating its object, and referring to the frantic efforts made by a disreputable clique to distort the facts of our position and poison the minds of the Fra-

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ternity abroad, by a resort to the vilest personalities and the most unblushing falsehoods. He informed the brethren that he had laid the proceedings of the preliminary meeting before the Grand Master, immediately after their occurrence, and had received an answer from him, in which he (the G. M.) said, that although he did not approve of local conventions, yet, relying on the frankness and loyalty of his New York brethren, he would not interfere with the deliberations of this.

The Committee on Permanent Organization reported the following as permanent officers of the Convention:

President, W. WM. GURNEY.

Vice-President, W. JNO. J. TINDALE.

Secretaries, ROBT. BEATTY, JR. and W. CHAS. F. NEWTON.

On motion, the report was received and the nominations unanimously confirmed.

A communication from Independent Lodge, No. 185, approving the objects of Convention, was received and ordered on file.

The W. ROBERT D. HOLMES, of Mystic Tie Lodge, presented the following preamble and resolutions:

Whereas, At the late Annual Communication of the M. W. Grand Lodge, to which we owe allegiance, the principal subject for discussion and decision, was the proposed union with the brethren who were separated from the lawful body, by the acts of 1848-9, resulting in the disfranchisement of Past Masters, both retrospectively and prospectively, which separation still continues, involving an expensive litigation, without the most distant approach to any result, satisfactory or otherwise, dividing friends and brothers and making feud and enmity where peace, order and brotherly love should reign, and

Whereas, It is keenly felt by the brethren residing in the city of New York and vicinity, that their interests in this matter were entirely ignored, and their wishes and sentiments purposely distorted by interested parties out of the state, who can only be regarded in the light of quarrelsome intermeddlers, so that our brethren in other portions of the

state, whose interests ought to be identical with our own, came to the Annual Communication with fixed instructions to give effect to a foregone conclusion, by determinedly voting down, not only the basis of union, as reported by the committee, but every attempt at a compromise, emanating from the city brethren; thus apparently drawing a line of demarkation and dividing the jurisdiction into two separate and well defined parties, one in favor of peace and harmony and the other opposed to it; and

Whereas, Viewing these proceedings as unfraternal and subversive of the pure teachings of our ritual, as calculated, if persisted in, to lead to a final rupture and division of the state into hostile camps, which prospect must be painful to every good Mason, every sincere wisher for the melioration of society in general, and the Order we represent in particular, we have felt called upon, in pursuance of our desire to accomplish a peace that shall draw the vail of oblivion over all past offences; unite the now severed portions of the Masonic family with the lawful Grand Lodge as one inseparable Fraternity, and remove the stigma now resting on the good name of New York Masonry, and in pursuance of our right to meet together and peaceably discuss our internal affairs, we have this day assembled in convention, to give expression to our sentiments, and to appeal to our brethren in every part of the state, to unite with us, in a peaceful effort for peace and harmony; the closer drawing of the bonds that unite us to the Fraternity throughout the world, and the final removal of all causes of discord, strife and dissonance; therefore

1. *Resolved*, That we are now as we were before and during the communication of the M. W. Grand Lodge, in favor of peace and union on honorable and conciliatory terms, and that we will spare no lawful efforts to bring about a settlement of our present difficulties, that shall be alike honorable and satisfactory to both parties.

2. *Resolved*, That we most cordially and fraternally invite our brethren throughout the state, whatever may have been their past feelings on this subject; with whatever degree of suspicion they may have been led by the enemies of the institution in our midst, to regard their New York brethren, to lay aside those feelings and prejudices and unite with us in removing the money-changers from the

temple, and the divided f

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temple, and in a kindly and fraternal endeavor to reunite the divided family in one fold, under one shepherd.

3. *Resolved*, That we most emphatically deny any intention to create a schism or division, or in any manner attain the full authority of the Grand Lodge, having jurisdiction over us, but on the contrary, we most ardently desire to bring back our brethren, now divided from us and inaugurate an era of Fraternity when all interests shall be identical, and the distinctions of residence be forever put away.

4. *Resolved*, That for the purpose of bringing about a union, closing the litigation that is ever beginning and never ending, and once more placing the funds and property of the Grand Lodge in its custody, it is only required that the Grand Lodge should so amend section 90 of our Constitution, as to unconditionally restore Past Masters, who were such in 1849, to the rights and privileges they had till then enjoyed, and refer all minor subjects of difference to a committee for adjustment; and we therefore recommend to the brethren throughout the state, the adoption of a resolution in their respective lodges, expressive of their willingness to make this concession to the spirit of peace, in the full belief that upon its final ratification New York will again be a unit, and resume her former status among the Grand Lodges of the world.

5. *Resolved*, That in asking for the restoration of Past Masters to 1849, we do so because we feel the assurance that it will be the means of restoring harmony to the jurisdiction, but at the same time we are as much opposed to the indiscriminate restoration of Past Masters up to the present or any future time, as any other portion of our brethren can be; we believe that our present system of Grand Lodge representation is as fair and equitable as any that can be devised, and we will sustain it to the best of our ability, as we will also maintain the integrity and authority of the M. W. Grand Lodge under which we hold our warrants.

6. *Resolved*, That we consider the partial restoration of Past Masters, as adopted at the late Annual Communication, and the rescinding of the resolution of 1852, as harbingers of a better time coming, and most earnestly beseech our brethren not to pause in the good work till its full and perfect fruition is accomplished.

7. *Resolved*, That a committee of nine be appointed by the Convention, to prepare an address to our brethren throughout the state, setting forth our views at length, and requesting their co-operation in this effort for peace.

Bro. HOLMES supported the resolutions by an eloquent and forcible address, and on motion they were adopted as the sense of the Convention.

W. HENRY W. TURNER, of Amity Lodge, presented the following Plan of Union:

PROPOSITIONS

For the settlement of difficulties now existing between the M. W. Grand Lodge of the State of New York, and those brethren who were formerly under its jurisdiction, but separated therefrom by the occurrences of 1849, and now known as the M. W. Grand Lodge of the State of New York, (under the old Constitutions.)

PRELIMINARY EXPLANATION.

It is claimed by the friends of peace and harmony, that the only condition in which real Freemasonry can exist is one of peace, and that there are difficulties in the masonic family in this state which ought to be healed. It is contended, by others, that there are no difficulties, and hence nothing to heal.

The brethren residing in the city of New York and vicinity being constantly surrounded by the difficulties, and most affected by them, assume the affirmative of the above proposition, and leave the negative to the advocacy of those who are fond of disorder and other equally pernicious abstractions.

In order to arrive at a clear understanding of the matter, it is only necessary to inquire, who compose the "Masonic family?" Why, simply those who have been regularly made Masons? "Once a Mason, always a Mason," is an indisputable axiom, and no argument is needed to prove, that though a brother may be deprived, for cause, (temporarily or permanently,) of the exercise of his Masonic rights or privileges, yet he is, nevertheless, still a Mason, because the primary covenant which has been mutually sealed cannot

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be annulled; the individual cannot infringe its requirements, nor can the society recall the knowledge thus communicated, which knowledge, in reality, makes the Mason.

Now, we have legal masonic knowledge, that the brethren who left this jurisdiction, in 1849, were regularly made Masons, and hence are a portion of the Masonic family. We need go no further in pursuit of such information than the printed proceedings of our own Grand Lodge in 1856, where, at page 152, we find the following unmistakable language:

"Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed, for the purpose of preparing and presenting some suitable and proper plan for a settlement of any difficulties that may exist among the Masons in this state, if the same be practicable; to report at their earliest convenience;" and at page 178:

"Resolved, That a Committee, to prepare a plan for the arrangement of any difficulties amongst the Fraternity, have leave to report, after the close of this Grand Lodge, to the Grand officers; and the Grand officers are hereby clothed with power to carry into effect any proper measures proposed to accomplish the object in view."

The intention of the Grand Lodge to reunite the separate elements of the jurisdiction, as indicated by the adoption of the above resolutions, is perfectly clear, but, owing to a subsequent misunderstanding among the representatives of lodges located more than ten miles from the City Hall; how brought about, though sufficiently plain to ourselves, we refrain from making the means of further trouble; the report of the Committee was declared unsatisfactory and the union indefinitely adjourned.

All parties now having had time for cool reflection, we deem it our duty, in the spirit of fraternal kindness, to make another attempt at reconciliation. To our comprehension the real difficulty lies in the effect of the amendment to the Constitution of 1848-9, depriving all Past Masters of the right exercised by them previous to that time, of voting in Grand Lodge when present. A fraternal compromise on this point will carry with it all minor difficulties, and restore harmony to the jurisdiction. We unanimously believe, that although the Grand Lodge has an undoubted right to fix the qualifications of its membership,

it should do so by prospective laws, and not by the abrogation of already acquired rights; and the compromise we propose, is the unconditional restoration of the Past Masters, who were such on the 31st day of December, 1849, for which purpose we submit the following

PROPOSITIONS.

1. To amend the Constitution of the Grand Lodge, in the manner therein provided, by striking out section 90, and inserting, in its place, the following, viz:

§ 90. This Grand Lodge shall be composed of all the Grand officers, and of all such Past Grand Masters, Past Deputy Grand Masters, Past Grand Wardens, Past Grand Secretaries, and Past Grand Treasurers, as shall have been duly elected and installed, and have served one year in their respective offices; of the Masters and Wardens, or representatives legally appointed, of all the lodges under this jurisdiction; and of all such Past Masters of lodges under this jurisdiction as shall have been elected, installed and served one year in the chair, as Master, prior to December 31st, 1849, and who were in good standing at that time.

2. That all proceedings had in relation to suspensions or expulsions, arising out of the transactions known as the "DIFFICULTIES OF 1849," shall be rescinded; and all such persons, as may have been so suspended or expelled, restored to full membership, and entitled to all the rights and privileges of Masonry; provided, that such persons shall, upon the ratification of these propositions, give up their organization, and return to the masonic homestead from which they have been so long estranged.

3. All minor subjects of difference, as the lawsuit, finances, properties, &c., shall be referred to a committee of ten, consisting of five from each party, for final and amicable adjustment.

The above, together with Bro. HOLMES' resolutions were, on motion, referred to a special committee of five.

The Chair appointed Bros. TURNER, SIMONS, TAYLOR, HOLMES and DUGANNE such committee, who, after deliberation, presented the following report:

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The Special Committee, to whom was referred the papers offered by W. Bros. HOLMES and TURNER, respectfully recommend that they be referred to a committee of nine, whose duty it shall be to prepare and report to this Convention, at its next session, an address to the brethren of the entire state, embodying a plan or basis for the adjustment of the difficulties now existing.

Which was received, and the recommendation adopted.

The Chair appointed, in accordance therewith, the following committee on address:

JOHN W. SIMONS,	H. W. TURNER.
LUTHER B. PERT,	A. J. H. DUGANNE,
JAS. B. TAYLOR,	GEO. C. WEBSTER,
GEO. W. RAY,	WM. LYONS,
JOHN J. TINDALE.	

On motion, the Convention adjourned, subject to the call of the officers.

NEW YORK, September 25, 1857.

An adjourned meeting of the Peace Convention was held in Odd Fellows' Hall, W. WM. GURNEY, presiding and a number of Delegates from Lodges.

The W. JAS. B. TAYLOR, from the committee of nine, presented the following

REPORT.

*To the Officers and Members of the
Masonic Peace Convention:*

The undersigned Committee, to whom was referred the duty of preparing an address to the Fraternity of this State, on the subject of Peace, respectfully present the following as the result of their labors.

JOHN W. SIMONS,
HENRY W. TURNER,
JOS. B. TAYLOR,
WM. LYONS,
GEO. YOUNG,
LUTHER B. PERT,
A. J. H. DUGANNE,
GEO. C. WEBSTER,
JNO. J. TINDALE,
<i>Committee.</i>

NEW YORK, Sept. 25, 1857.

BRETHREN:—In addressing you upon the subject of the estrangement which exists among the Masonic Fraternity within the jurisdiction of New York, it is proper that we should fully and frankly state the reasons which impelled us to this course.

The reasons which have moved us to attempt to bring about a reconciliation, are many, and to us substantial and incontrovertible; sophistry and falsehood cannot divert or destroy them.

Foremost among these, we may name the strong desire which universally prevails, to see harmony and peace once more restored throughout this entire jurisdiction; the belief that the motives and views of the movers and advocates of the measures proposed at the annual communication in June last, on the subject of healing the difficulties, were misunderstood by a large portion of the representatives then present; which misunderstanding was greatly increased by the circulation of statements, got up by parties whose Masonic standing was jeopardized, should a union be consummated. These false statements, which were intended to create a

These false statements were circulated at remote points in the jurisdiction, far away from the city of New York, where the evils attendant upon the existing estrangement are most severely felt, and which we trust would become powerless could a more intimate acquaintance be effected among the members of the Grand Lodge residing in the

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different sections of the state, most particularly with those resident out of the city and those resident within its limits. By a more intimate acquaintance and a more frequent and free interchange of views, we are constrained to believe that a more united action would result, and an effort, irresistible in its force, would be put forth to remove the evils under which we are now compelled to suffer and endure.

By a careful examination of the various views and feelings, felt and entertained, we shall, as we confidently hope, effectually break down the prejudices engendered, and by a more intimate acquaintance, remove those mistaken views and sentiments which lie in the way of our becoming a united, harmonious and happy Fraternity, bound together in the legitimate bonds of Masonic love, truth and justice. We propose to effect these ends by removing those errors which have beset the minds of the brethren in regard to the relative positions of the parties, as to locations, by a fair, open and manly expression of our views and sentiments, and a free communication with our brethren throughout the entire jurisdiction, and thus impart such a knowledge of the great Masonic mind as will enable us to conduct our future efforts in a manner that when the M. W. Grand Lodge again assembles, and we are once more brought face to face, we may not see each other "as through a glass, darkly," but rather as brethren united in the bonds of a great and elevating institution, and strong with a noble emulation as to "who can best agree."

In order that we may arrive at so desirable a consummation, there must be preliminary explanation; the suspicions engendered among our brethren, who only see us once a year, and who, during the interval, are mainly dependent for their knowledge of each other on the wilfully distorted statements of those who are interested in deceiving them by their misrepresentations, must be removed, and this can best be accomplished by a direct communion among ourselves without the intervention of any parties, especially those who have labored so diligently in misrepresenting the acts and motives of those brethren who are so unfortunate as to reside in the city of New York, and who believe that MASONRY and PEACE are synonymous terms.

We disclaim having any personal ends to serve, or any sectional ambition to gratify; we have no ulterior or concealed motives which impel us—on the contrary, we seek to do justice to the cause of Masonic progress, no matter how many individuals fall by its establishment; we humbly desire to promote the best interests of the whole Fraternity in our state, whose interests are everywhere identical; whose aims should ever be the same.

We fraternally submit, that, for such a purpose, you can, and of right ought to, add your efforts to ours, with the certainty that your and our reward will be more glorious than a thousand forensic victories; more substantial than the acquisition of a thousand times the sums at issue in the legal contest, of which, though parties litigant, we are profoundly ignorant.

We believe that the difficulties of 1849 have existed much too long for our good name among the Masons of our country and the world, and that we are called upon now by every tie that binds us together, to make an effort—an united effort—for their final and entire removal, that we may no longer be a by-word and a reproach among the Fraternity of whom New York alone presents the humiliating spectacle of a divided and litigious household.

We desire, utterly to break up and destroy the idea of a local, partisan or sectional spirit among the brethren of this state, and, if possible, to establish an era of Fraternity, where *strife* and *dissension* and all uncharitableness shall be put away, and when all efforts shall be, not for the supremacy of this or any locality, but for a closer and more fraternal union, for the more perfect working out of the designs drawn on the great trestle-board of the Order by our supreme Grand Master. We feel it to be our duty to allow no suitable opportunity to pass unimproved for the furtherance of this generous idea, wherefore we have assembled together to seek wisdom from many counselors, to communicate to our brethren a knowledge of our aims, and by all honorable and constitutional means to endeavor to fix on some plan, or basis of a plan, that may re-unite the ancient fold, and secure to us and our successors the blessings of peace.

It must have been apparent to the most casual observer, present at the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge

in June last, that the city rep the question of that any such n apparent, before minds were disa would have vote of the Constitu number; it is a against a union, moved. These, cannot check th the light of tru these classes e think not, the require to see t

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in June last, that the representatives of the lodges located out of the city of New York were impressed with an idea that the city representatives were banded together to carry the question of union at all hazards; yet, it was not true that any such understanding existed, and we think it was apparent, before the Grand Lodge adjourned, that many minds were disabused of the error. That many individuals would have voted for union at any price—even the sacrifice of the Constitution itself—is probable, though but few in number; it is also probable that some would have voted against a union, had all constitutional objections been removed. These, also, were few; and the influence of such cannot check the tide which sets stronger and stronger as the light of truth ascends to its meridian. Can either of these classes exert a controlling influence? We humbly think not, the masses are reasonable and just, and only require to see the truth to follow it.

Nothing can be farther from the truth, and nothing can be more effectually calculated to break up the harmony of the jurisdiction, or put enmity between the brethren, than the entertaining sentiments so derogatory to the character and views of the brethren living in the city and its immediate vicinity.

The error developed by the proceedings, is to be found in the fact, that the lodges out of the city, instead of seeking to know the real sentiments of the craft resident within it by intercourse with them, suffered themselves to be led astray by parties interested in so doing.

It appears to us, that if the unfortunate subjects that now divide and distract the state are ever to be satisfactorily disposed of, a more genial spirit must prevail among the representatives than was manifested among them at the late session—the majority must learn to respect the feelings (and the opinions, too) of the minority, otherwise we shall look in vain for a happy issue to the deliberations of the Grand Body in annual assembly convened. Suppose, brethren, that if, in place of coming to the Grand Lodge with preconceived ideas of the intent of the local delegates, you had waited to make up your minds until the whole subject had been fairly and thoroughly canvassed, and we had been offered an opportunity of presenting the condition of things which surround us before the Grand Lodge; suppose that

if, instead of a predetermination that we wanted something more than was strictly right, you had cast aside all unworthy suspicions, and that the united wisdom of the Masonic family, drawn from all parts of the jurisdiction and collected in one body, had been actuated by brotherly love and the sole desire of contributing mutually to support the dignity and advance the prosperity and unity of the craft, what might not have been accomplished? Yet what measure was proposed, what plan suggested, or what resolution adopted, that had this most desirable end for its object? Shall we answer, or shall we rather allow the facts to answer for us? We prefer the latter alternative, and we think that a candid examination of the acts of the majority, will show that, instead of bringing about a feeling of greater union in the Fraternity, the result has been to increase acrimonious feelings, bitter resentments, and a more extended belief that our troubles must, sooner or later, end in a separation.

To avoid this painful alternative is the object of this address, and knowing that we only seek the greatest good of the greatest number, we feel that we are but fulfilling the most sacred injunctions of our solemn covenants, when we fraternally invite your assistance and co-operation in our endeavor to reclaim the lost and wandering brethren to the true fold, and to unite the whole Fraternity of the state in one, and only one, Masonic jurisdiction.

Before proceeding to examine the causes that have led to the present unhappy state of affairs, we desire to say that we cherish a profound respect for our present constitution, and are as far from having any desire to tinker or change its provisions, except in so far, as may be required to bring about a peace, as any other portion of our brothers can be. We are as strongly opposed to an indiscriminate restoration of Past Masters, as any of our friends in other portions of the state can be. We seek only for an honorable peace, and, with the experience of the late session to guide us, we think we can point out a basis of settlement that will meet the views of every brother really desirous of attaining that end.

The history of Freemasonry in this state is an open page, which all may read, and certainly no one can do so without being convinced that the most fruitful well-spring of

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trouble among the craft in this jurisdiction, has been the ever growing jealousy of locality, or to speak more plainly the difference of opinion and interest, which is more imaginary than real, between the city and country brethren.

The division of 1823 was evidently brought about by this sentiment. The lodges located out of the city were engaged for years in the attempt, by various devices, to gain not only an equality of power, but *the* power itself; they complained that the Grand Lodge was permanently located in the city of New York; that its salaried officers were all here; that their delegates, not being paid, there was no equality of representation; for while the city brethren, having the Grand Lodge always with them, could be present at all Communications, annual and quarterly, they could only attend at the price of additional burdens to those they already paid in the shape of tribute to the general fund. To remedy this complaint, the system of mileage and per diem fees was introduced, and established at the June meeting in 1821. This was followed by extended privileges to proxies, by proposed amendments to the Constitution, among which was one depriving Past Masters (except one from each lodge) of their votes, and finally by an open rupture and division of the Grand Lodge into two separate and distinct jurisdictions.

Matters continued in this position until 1827, when a reunion took place, but no sooner had the lowering clouds, conjured up by designing men for the basest political ends, begun to give place to the returning empire of sound public opinion, than the old leaven which had been stilled by the overshadowing events of the memorable persecution to which the Order had been subjected, again began to work, and the same jealousies, as of old, to make themselves manifest among the brethren.

It would extend this address to an inordinate length, should we attempt to follow up the history of all the movements from this source, and we pass on to their culmination in 1848-9.

It will be recollected that, as in 1823, the complaint was, that the lodges out of the city were unable to obtain an equality of representation, and the remedy proposed, as

before, was the disfranchisement of Past Masters, except one from each lodge.

The brethren to be affected by the proposed alterations of the Constitution claimed that, as Past Masters were among the original constituents of the Provincial Grand Lodge, and the subsequently established independent State Grand Lodge, they were in the enjoyment of an inherent and vested right, of which they could not be deprived, and that one portion of the body was incapable of lawfully disfranchising the other.

The advocates of the opposite doctrine argued, that as the right to vote at all, was given to Past Masters by an enactment of the Grand Lodge in the formation of its Constitution, it might, by the same means, be taken away from them, as nothing could be clearer than the right of the Grand Lodge to alter or amend its Constitution when deemed necessary, for the benefit or interest of the craft; and it is but fair to say, that this view of the question has been largely sustained by the Grand Lodges of the world, and notably by the Grand Lodge of England, from whence our first authority was derived.

Having taken no part in the discussions of the period, and recurring to them now, not for the purpose of reawakening slumbering animosities, but with the higher aim of peace and conciliation, we trust we shall not be deemed recusants if we differ somewhat from what has heretofore been deemed to be a settled point.

It appears to us to be a little matter, whether the fact of voting as a Past Master be deemed a right or a privilege, it is indisputable that it was sanctioned from the beginning, first by the original patent from England, and by every subsequent constitution enacted by the Grand Lodge.

This privilege was legally and constitutionally vested in the brethren who had regularly qualified themselves to obtain it. It was in fact a contract that from the very nature of its conditions could not be abrogated, so far as those were concerned, who, up to the period of the final abrogation of the law, had been in the enjoyment of the privilege.

The Constitution provided, in terms, that every brother who should lawfully pass the chair of his lodge should become a voting member of the Grand Lodge, and the

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Masters of lodges entered upon the discharge of their duties with a distinct understanding, as between themselves and the Grand Lodge, to that effect.

Now, when a brother officer had finished his term of office, he had fulfilled his part of the agreement; he had purchased the right to vote at a stipulated price, and paid for it an equivalent that could never be recalled, hence the Grand Lodge, in depriving him of his lawfully acquired right, was in reality repudiating an obligation—refusing to fulfill a contract made legally, and without condition or constraint.

Herein, it appears to us, was the fatal error of 1849. We are as ready as any to concede the fact that the increase of Past Masters was a great, an unmitigated evil; a moral wrong—for, by this time, the legislation of the Grand Lodge must have been entirely committed to their overwhelming majority, had no steps been taken to arrest the evil. But, with respectful deference, we submit, that the majority, in 1849, went too far; in cutting off the diseased limb, they, at the same time, inflicted a mortal wound on that great standard of Masonic conduct, JUSTICE.

Instead of a purely prospective law, which would have reduced the difficulty to a simple question of time, they, as before said, repudiated their own obligations, and enacted the most repulsive of all laws—particularly in this country, whose institutions forbid it—a retrospective one.

Allow us to illustrate. Some years ago the Congress of the United States passed an act called a General Bankrupt Law, under the provisions of which, a man was enabled to discharge his liabilities by a summary process, and begin the world anew. The act in question was subsequently repealed. Will any one claim that, in repealing the act, they could at the same time repeal the immunities acquired under it, or again saddle a man with the liabilities he had got rid of, by legal process under the act repealed? We think not; yet, we cannot see that had Congress attempted to do so, they would have committed an act in anywise differing in effect from that of the Past Master amendment of 1849.

There is another matter connected with this transaction, that should not be lost sight of, and that is the proper in-

interpretation of the amendatory clause of the Constitution then in force; for the purpose of most clearly exhibiting which, the following extracts are made from the various editions of the Constitution published by authority of the Grand Lodge.

In the copies of the Constitution of 1845—that is, the Constitution adopted in June, 1845, and printed immediately thereafter—there are to be found several sections or articles, among which are the following, which were omitted in subsequent editions; why, or by what authority, is not now ascertainable.

"ARTICLE CVI.—FUTURE AMENDMENTS AND NEW REGULATIONS.

"No amendment to this Constitution shall be made or have any effect, until the same shall have had the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge at two successive June Communications, unless, in addition to the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, at one June Communication, it shall have received the affirmative vote of a majority of the lodges within this jurisdiction."

"If such proposed amendment shall receive the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, at one June Communication, the same shall then be appended to the published proceedings, at the end, under the caption, 'Proposed Amendments to the Constitution,' and sent to each lodge within the jurisdiction, in order that the lodges may, if they think proper, instruct their representatives thereon; and the action of the Grand Lodge, in relation thereto, shall also appear in its appropriate place in the proceedings."

2. "The Grand Lodge may, by vote, at any June meeting, adopt new General Regulations, not inconsistent with this Constitution, to have effect for such time as may be named therein, not exceeding one year from the time of their adoption; but, except for the time aforesaid, no general regulation or resolution, to operate as such, affecting the Fraternity or the lodges, or their action, shall be made, or have any effect, unless the same shall have received the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, at two successive June Communications."

"If such proposed amendment shall receive the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, at one June Communication, it shall be appended to the published proceedings, at the end, under the caption, 'Proposed Amendments to the Constitution,' and sent to each lodge within the jurisdiction, in that form sent."

"ARTICLE CVII.—
The Constitution of 1845, and all general regulations which have been adopted, and which are now in force, and which are not by revoked and annulled."

As before stated, the printed copies of the Constitution, particular, with the amendments, shall be published by the Grand Lodge, identical with the original, of repeating it."

In the amendments of the Constitution, lodges in 1855, may be made or have had the affirmative vote at an annual Communication, exceeding and preceding the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, within this jurisdiction."

A careful examination of the Constitution will show that the Grand Lodge intend that the amendments shall not be passed in any Communication, which is not a Communication, until a majority of the provisions of the Constitution are passed."

By the provisions of the Constitution, the Grand Lodge are empowered, by the representatives, to make the direct amendments to the Constitution, the Past Master, they made."

If such proposed new regulations shall receive the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, at one June meeting, they shall be appended to the published proceedings, at the end, under the caption, 'Proposed New Regulations,' and in that form sent to each lodge within the jurisdiction."

ARTICLE CVII.—REPEALING CLAUSE.—The former written Constitution of this Grand Lodge is hereby repealed: all general regulations and resolutions, operating as such, which have been heretofore adopted by this Grand Lodge, and which are not embraced in this Constitution, are hereby revoked and annulled."

As before stated, these articles are omitted in later printed copies of this same Constitution, agreeing in every particular, with the exception of the omissions alluded to.

An edition printed by Bro. James Narine, in 1851, purporting to have been revised, approved and ordered to be published by the Grand Lodge, June 5th, A.L. 5845, is identical with the above, and there is, therefore, no necessity of repeating it.

In the amended Constitution, which was submitted to the lodges in 1854, section 125 provides that amendments may be made either by two successive June votes, or by one vote at an annual meeting, and during the year next succeeding and previous to the next June Communication, by the affirmative vote of a majority of the lodges in the jurisdiction.

A careful examination of these various editions of the Constitution will enable the readers of this address to understand the ground upon which we stand, when we contend that the constitutional amendment, passed in 1849, was not passed in conformity with the then existing Constitution, which must be considered as the operating Constitution, until amended or annulled in conformity with the provisions of the instrument itself.

By the provision above quoted, the lodges were empowered, *if they thought proper to instruct their representatives*, and not to vote affirmatively or negatively on the direct question of adopting or rejecting a proposed amendment. When, therefore, the Grand Lodge declared the Past Master amendment adopted, it seems to us that they made a declaration in open violation of the very Con-

stitution they proposed so to amend; and, this being the case, can we consistently claim that the wrong committed was entirely on the side of the recusant brethren?

Ought not some allowance to be made for the frailties of human nature—for the feelings of men who stood by helpless, and saw a constitutional right wrested from them by an unconstitutional enactment? An unprejudiced mind must incline to an affirmative answer; and our brethren, in approaching the consideration of this question, should endeavor to forget the prejudices of the past; to bury in oblivion the rude scenes of 1849, and the personal animosities growing out of them. No good, no Masonic end can be subserved by any further reference to them.

We shall not attempt to apologize for the occurrences of 1849. We have no sympathy with acts of physical violence, for we cannot understand that they are ever necessary to the establishment of correct principles.

The tenets and inculcations of Masonry cannot be, in the least degree, sustained by them; the purity of their character we believe to be beyond the reach of any such a sphere; but we should not too hastily condemn the actors in those scenes, at least not before we calmly and dispassionately examine the views and opinions which prompted their action.

If it be found that the views entertained by them in regard to the measures contemplated, and their interpretation of the Constitution were justifiable; then it appears to us we should be indulgent toward them, and in justice extend the mantle of charity with the hand of fellowship, and as we are fresh upon the checkered pavement, and were not participants in the strife, we should, with the greater degree of frankness, judge dispassionately; and, as far as possible, without prejudice or bias upon the acts of our predecessors; and, as their successors, mutually overlook their foibles; and in the true spirit of Masonic brotherly kindness, endeavour to soothe the angry passions that have been awakened, and draw into one fold the scattered flock of our Supreme Grand Master, whose power is love, and in the spirit of that power, greet each other with fraternal Masonic regard.

The fact that Past Masters were among the original constituents of both the provincial and the present Grand

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society, Masonry might be exposed to perpetual variations, which would effectually destroy all the good effects that have hitherto resulted from its universality and extended progress." (See Preston's Illustrations, pp. 150, 1, 2, 3, vol. 3, U. M. Library.)

We need pursue the argument no further to show the manifest impropriety; the moral and Masonic wrong of retrospective enactments. We think that every right-minded man and Mason will agree with us in the view we have taken, and as such compose the great majority of our brethren, may we not confidently hope, that they will unite with us in removing this stain from the escutcheon of New York Masonry, and thus open the door for a full and fraternal reconciliation of the difficulties that have too long disgraced and distracted this jurisdiction?

An apprehension seems to have existed among our brethren in the rural districts, that the party we seek and desire to bring back to the fold, is mainly composed of Past Masters, and that in restoring them to their privileges, they would in reality be yielding up the power they now hold to irresponsible hands and re-engraft upon the Fraternity all the evils they believe the act of 1849 to have banished.

We hasten to correct this misapprehension, for it has not the slightest foundation in truth. A few facts will at once set the whole matter in its true light. At the June meeting in 1849, seventy-three lodges were represented; of these less than ten were located in the city of New York, some of them it is true had a large number of Past Masters, *but still not enough to prevent the vote of the Grand Lodge being given for the passage of the amendment that was to debar them of their rights in the future.*

Eight years have elapsed since then, and in the mutations of time and circumstances, removals from the jurisdiction and deaths, it is reasonable to suppose that many who then voted will never do so again; (bear in mind that it is only proposed to restore those who were in good standing then,) and it is believed by those most conversant with the subject and best enabled to judge, that the whole vote, if it could be mustered, would not exceed sixty, or at most seventy.

Now, at the late Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge, there were cast by the representatives of lodges

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out of New York city, on every question of interest, some SEVEN HUNDRED AND ODD VOTES, in opposition to TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE of those representing lodges located in the city.

It will need no very intricate calculation to demonstrate that the addition of SEVENTY VOTES to the city strength can be of no avail against the overwhelming power of the rural districts, when they choose to exercise it, even supposing it possible to unite the entire vote of the city upon one question.

The city have nothing to gain but peace; they do not seek to acquire power, but to unite the whole family in this state in the bonds of Masonic fellowship.

Why should sectional distinctions exist? Why should not the interests of city and country be the same? and why, more than all, should we not seek some higher development of our energies than the perpetuation of sectional jealousies? Why should not the time, the talent, and the means of the Grand Lodge be devoted to some purpose more worthy of the Order; more in accordance with its divine principles, than attempts at diplomacy, and the means of sectional domination over each other?

The time has gone by when good men are to be satisfied with the mere name of Masons, or to be kept in allegiance to an institution engaged in a life-long chancery suit, and in spreading enmity and division between those among whom no contentions should ever exist.

What evidences has the Grand Lodge given since 1849, that the true objects of the Order are kept in view, or even understood by the brethren under its charge? Have we any asylum designed to receive, within its sheltering walls, the aged and infirm brother, or the widow and the orphan, in the hour of their desolation? What noble pile can we point to and say. this was erected by the Fraternity, under the auspices of the Grand Lodge, as an enduring memento of its devotion to the cause? How much of the rich store of Masonic literature, in existence, has the Grand Lodge distributed to its subordinates, or collected and placed where the Fraternity can have access for reference, as an incentive to some higher attainment than mere proficiency in the ritual? Yet the subordinate lodges have paid into

its treasury, since 1849, over NINETY THOUSAND DOLLARS. Of this large amount, a trifling per centage has been given in works of charity, some seven or eight thousand dollars, have been invested, (as the nucleus of a future law suit,) and the balance——? our disbursing officers have properly accounted for their disposition of it, their books and vouchers are correct, and it is not in that respect that we inquire into the disposition which has been made of it, but rather we invite you to reflect, and, in your minds, to investigate, keeping constantly your Masonic duty in view, and see what will be the answer you thus obtain respecting the balance.

We may be permitted to remind you, that a respectable portion thereof has been paid for counsel fees, costs of court, attendance of witnesses in the law suit that has been in progress for eight years, and is no nearer a settlement, so far as we can learn, than it was at the beginning, or will be twenty years hence, unless some different course is pursued than has characterized our action for the past few years.

Brethren, we owe something to public opinion in this matter; in defiance of that, we could not have attained our present prosperous condition throughout the country, nor could we maintain it for a single year, if the public voice were turned against us; witness the days of 1826 to 1837.

Now, when public opinion asks us, the question, "WHAT IS MASONRY?" We answer, that it is a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols; that it unites men of every country, clime and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance; that it sympathizes with the unfortunate, compassionates their miseries, and endeavors to restore peace to their troubled minds; that hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, and the heart and tongue join in promoting each other's welfare, and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.

Brethren, if in addition to this, our theory, we are asked to elucidate it by our practice, to show the fruits of our profession, shall we give them, for example, the lamentable fact, that men who have faithfully served the institution with counsel, purse and sword; who stood up for it and maintained it in adversity as in prosperity, have been cast

out among the profane, because a new generation, thinking themselves wiser than the fathers, determined to ignore a solemn contract, and, in their haste to rid themselves of its requirements, trampled on the rights and immunities of many a PATRIARCH, without whom the Order might even now have gone to the wall, and ICHABOD have been written on the place that had once known it; shall we point them to the edifying spectacle of men bound together in a sacred and solemn covenant, summoning each other before a court of justice, to engage in a sorry wrangle for the possession of a paltry sum of money? Shall we tell them that charity, the highest step in our ladder, and which hopeth all things; endureth all things; is not puffed up; "whose rosy wings are bathed in the golden sunlight of Heaven itself," is but a name with us, since it forbids us to overlook the faults of our own tribe and kindred. and restrains us from the exercise of any feeling, but that of bitter and uncontrollable hatred to those who have once offended us? or shall we rather take counsel together how we shall get rid of our plague spot, of schism and disunion, that we may no longer blush, as we acknowledge that we have made no effort for a reconciliation or harmony between our practice and our theory.

There is still another consideration. Shall we bequeath this unprofitable quarrel to our successors? The destinies of the Order are now committed to our keeping. We are the stewards of a mighty trust, and for the faithful discharge of our duties, those who are to come after us will hold our memories accountable. Let us reflect that we cannot impress on future minds the personal feelings we may individually entertain on the subject of our present differences. If another generation is to be called to settle them, individuals will be lost sight of, and judgment will be rendered on the general value of the quarrel which is clearly not such an heir-loom as we should desire to hand down to posterity. We ought, therefore, not to be satisfied with a merely negative action, but we should, by positive exertion, endeavor to restore New York to her former STATUS, and thus teach the Fraternity, here and abroad, that we are abundantly able to maintain the dignity and honor of our Grand Lodge, and carry out the benevolent principles of our Order.

The principle contended for by each party has been mutually conceded; on the one hand by the unanimous adoption of the "Articles of Union," reported to the Grand Lodge at its late session; on the other, by the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution, restoring to Past Masters, who were such in 1849, and who are still in good standing, the right to vote. The real matters of difference are, therefore, now removed, leaving only minor details, which, we respectfully submit, might have been settled at the late annual meeting, had the majority felt so disposed. In this connection, permit us to call your attention to the proposed amendments to the Constitution, offered by M. W. Bro. Evans, which received the affirmative vote of the Grand Lodge, and which, by special resolution thereof, you will be called upon to consider and vote upon before the close of the present year.

There are two amendments proposed; the first restores to Past Masters, who were such on the 31st of December, 1849, the privileges they then enjoyed, and the second exactly neutralizes the good effect that might reasonably have been expected to result from the first, by limiting the collective Past Masters of a particular lodge to one vote.

We have already shown that as far as the city of New York is concerned, the number of brethren thus restored is extremely limited, and that even taking the extreme supposition that they could all be made to think, act and vote together, yet the number of actual representatives is so large as to render it obvious that the combined force of the Past Masters, for evil, (supposing them to be evil-minded, which we disclaim,) must be entirely nugatory. Again, let us not forget that we are all traveling forward on the "level of time," to that period when the affairs of earth shall no more concern us. In a few years, which are but the succession of a few days, we shall all disappear from the scene. Past Masters having no exemption from the common lot, it follows that the Grand Lodge will then become what it ought to have been in the beginning, a strictly representative body. Why not, then, be just and generous at once, and make the proposed amendments unconditional? The sessions of the Grand Lodge being held in the city of New York, it can hardly be supposed that

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any but city Past Masters, made such prior to 1849, will be present; and as their number is now ascertained to be so small, why make a restriction as to their manner of voting; for it seems to us that unless they are unconditionally restored to their original rights, there will be no acceptable restoration at all, and our efforts must end in disappointment, when, if allowed the fullest scope, they can accomplish nothing without the consent of the representatives of the country lodges.

Negative the second proposed amendment, and, in our opinion, you will remove the great stumbling block to a full and lasting union; but should you and your representatives persist in amending the Constitution as proposed, you will accomplish nothing more than the abstract acknowledgment of a principle.

If the amendments are, as we presume, intended as a peace-offering, the considerations here advanced demonstrate that they will fail in the accomplishment of the effect intended.

It is agreed on every hand, that in this country every man has a right to his own opinion. Now, suppose a lodge to have two Past Masters present at a session; unless they can agree they have no vote, and would, to all intents and purposes, remain in the same position as at present, debarred of their ancient prerogatives. The law would be a practical nonentity, a species of legislative quibbling, unworthy of the Grand Lodge and the craft in this state, and hence nothing practical would be accomplished by its enactment in its present shape. The power of correction lies with you, brethren; the proposed amendments will come before your several lodges, and you will individually have an opportunity of expressing your opinions, and giving them legal form, by your votes. This plain duty you cannot refuse to discharge, nor should you attempt to quiet your consciences by leaving the whole responsibility with the Grand Lodge. That distinguished body is far from infallible, and at best is but the representative of your sovereignty. The real power lies in the craft; for, without them, there could be no Grand Lodge, and the craft is morally responsible for the proper exercise of the functions it delegates to its servants. You cannot allow the interests

of the Grand Lodge to be separated from your own, for if you do, confusion and ruin must be the result. We call, then, upon every brother in the jurisdiction, seriously to consider upon this question, and to act with a view to a conscientious discharge of duty, and the magnitude of the interests involved, both in the present and the future.

The legislation of the Grand Lodge, like that of the state, to be effective, must represent the wishes and interests of those legislated for, and you can give it such direction, by a careful examination of the questions involved.

Finally, brethren, we invite your attention to the fact that a very large majority of the lodges and brethren in the city of New York and vicinity, are decidedly in favor of peace. Dwelling, as they do, in the very nucleus of the difficulties; meeting them at every turn in our daily life; satisfied that the quarrel originated in causes not now acting, and that it has existed much too long; ashamed of the stigma resting on our good name, and the suspicious inquiries directed to us when we go abroad; ashamed that a quarrel and law-suit, that could be settled by five sensible men in half a day, should go on from year to year, entailing large and needless expenses, and increasing the difficulties that originally surrounded it—we are determined that no honorable effort for its adjustment shall be spared by us. We believe that in this just cause we have not done our whole duty when we have attended a session of the Grand Lodge, and thrown on its decision the whole responsibility of the issue, and reverting back to the power vested in constituent members of a great Fraternity, we have sought the means of avoiding the difficulties presented in Grand Lodge in June last. We present the result of our efforts in the annexed PROPOSED TERMS OF UNION, and ask for them your fraternal consideration and co-operation.

PROPOSITIONS TO SERVE AS A BASIS OF UNION.

1. To amend the Constitution by striking out § 90, and inserting the following in its place:

§ 90. The Grand Lodge shall be composed of all the Grand Officers and of all such Past Grand Masters, Deputy Grand Masters, Past Grand Wardens, Past Grand Secre-

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aries and Past Grand Treasurers as shall have been duly elected, and have served one year in their respective offices; of the Masters, Wardens or Representatives legally appointed, of all the lodges under this jurisdiction, and of all such Past Masters of lodges under this jurisdiction, as shall have been elected, installed, and have served one year in the chair as Master, prior to December 31st, 1849, and who were in good standing at that time.

2. That all proceedings had in relation to suspensions and expulsions, arising out of the transactions known as the difficulties of 1849, shall be rescinded; and all such persons as may have been so suspended or expelled, be restored to the rights and privileges of Masonry—provided, that such persons shall, upon the ratification of these propositions, give up their organization, and return to the masonic homestead, from which they have been so long estranged.

3. Upon such return, and the completion of the union, the elective officers of the Grand Lodge over which Mordecai Myers lately presided, and over which now presides, shall be acknowledged as Past Grand Officers of this Grand Lodge, and their lodges shall be deemed regular lodges, and placed upon our registry.

4. All minor subjects of difference, as the law-suit; finances; properties, &c., shall be referred to a committee of ten, with power, consisting of five from each party, for final and amicable adjustment.

On motion, the address and plan of union were unanimously adopted, and four thousand copies ordered to be printed and distributed throughout this state, under the direction of the committee.

On motion, the Convention adjourned, subject to the call of its officers.

WM. GURNEY, *President.*

JNO. J. TINDALE, *V. President.*

ROBT. BEATTY, Jr., }
CHARLES F. NEWTON, } *Secretaries.*